

# STUDENTS' PERCEPTION ON SELECTED HUMAN RIGHTS PRACTICES: A CASE STUDY OF BASILAN STATE COLLEGE

Abegail C. Indama<sup>1</sup>, Sanira A. Atakal<sup>2</sup>

Basilan State College, Isabela City, Basilan, Philippines

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.7409149>

Published Date: 07-December-2022

---

**Abstract:** Human rights allow a person to live with dignity and in peace, away from the abuses that can be inflicted by abusive institutions or individuals. Many people have always suffered from the lack of these throughout history. Today, the world experiences numerous changes, and it corresponds to increased public attention on human rights. The country is faced with various pressing issues related to its political, economic, social and cultural conditions that breed many more human rights problems. Both students and teachers need to understand the universal elements of human rights as basis for promoting social progress, better living conditions and greater freedom. Human rights education becomes an integral part of the general education that must be integrated in all levels of the education system. Hence, this study aims to determine students' perception on human rights and correlate the same to their demographic groups to determine any significant differences. Results suggest that student-respondents have a high level of awareness on the talk about human rights and are in accord to the concept that human rights are for all and considers the same as an important piece of the community.

**Keywords:** human rights, social progress, human rights education.

---

## I. INTRODUCTION

All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood.

Human rights describe equal rights and freedom for everybody by the fact of being human and without distinction of any kind of race, color, sex, language, religion, political or other opinions. In fact, the lack of human rights has a lot of effects on people's lives. Human rights allow a person to live with dignity and in peace, away from the abuses that can be inflicted by abusive institutions or individuals. But the fact remains that there are rampant human rights violations around the world. Many people have always suffered from the lack of them throughout history. Today, the world experiences numerous changes, and it corresponds to increased public attention on human rights. The spread of democracy across the globe explains this latest occurrence, and countries like Philippines are making broader attempts to ensure access and protection of human rights.

To further promote the importance of human rights in the Philippines, December 4 to 10 of each year is marked as the National Human Rights Consciousness Week via Republic Act No. 9201. December 10 is also considered as the United Nations Human Rights Day. It commemorates the day the UN General Assembly adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948. The 1987 Philippine Constitution has likewise marked the importance of human rights and the exercise thereof to the general welfare of every Filipino. The rights of Filipinos can be found in Article III of the Constitution. Also called the Bill of Rights, it includes 22 sections which declare a Filipino citizen's rights and privileges that the Constitution has to protect, no matter what. Aside from various local laws, human rights in the Philippines are also guided by the United Nation's International Bill of Human Rights – a consolidation of three legal documents including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), and the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights (ICESCR).

The concept of "human rights," in the context of the Philippines, pertains mainly but is not limited to the civil and political rights of a person living in the Philippines by reason of the 1987 Philippine Constitution. Human rights are a justified set of claims that set moral standards to members of the human race, not exclusive to a specific community or citizenship. Membership in the human race is the sole qualification to obtain these rights. Human rights, unlike area-specific conventions of international laws (e.g. European Convention on Human Rights and International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights), are universally justifiable as it pertains to the entire human race, regardless of geographical location.

The human rights situation in the Philippines became an issue in recent years with reports of rising number of victims of extra-judicial killings, prompting the United Nations to take action. The Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions, Mr. Philip Alston, visited the Philippines in 2007 and subsequently filed a report with recommendations on how to address the situation. The European Union (EU), in seriously considering the situation, launched the EU-Philippine Justice Support Programme (EPJUST) to help all stakeholders in the Philippines - in government, in the judiciary and in the Commission on Human Rights, and in civil society - to work together to address the critical issue of extra-legal killings and enforced disappearances. This project was formally launched on February 11, 2010 in Manila. Local and international human rights organizations launched campaigns on the extra-judicial killings issue, demanding accountability for those involved in the killings. Media organizations in the Philippines and their international counterparts also campaigned to stop the killing of members of the media. The Philippine human rights situation is not however limited to the issue of extrajudicial killings and disappearances. The country faces problems related to its political, economic, social and cultural conditions that breed many more human rights problems.

Every student and teacher needs to understand the universal elements of Human Rights as a basis for promoting social progress, better living conditions and greater freedom. Therefore, human rights education becomes an integral part of the general education and be integrated into all subjects, in particular social science education. Human Rights education is not just about Human Rights, i.e. acquiring knowledge. It is also education for Human Rights, helping people to feel the importance of Human Rights, to integrate them into the way they live, and to take action to promote and protect the rights of others on individual, local, national and international levels. Human Rights education contributes directly to improving the life of both individuals and the community.

The Center for Research and Development in Education of the Philippine Normal University surveyed a sample of secondary school students in the Philippines to measure and analyze their human rights awareness. The survey is part of a multi-country research project organized by the Asia-Pacific Human Rights Information Center (HURIGHTS OSAKA). The project, launched in 2003, generally aims to provide an independent and critical review of the state of existing human rights education in schools programs in several Asian countries. Aside from the Philippines, the research project covers India, Sri Lanka, and Japan. These countries have human rights education in schools' programs that have been implemented for a significant period of time now.

The students demonstrated high knowledge of human rights concepts relating to children and people in general. But when the items center on specific people (e.g., tribal communities/indigenous people, government officials), the respondents showed seemingly moderate knowledge. Among the items, the respondents generally have lower scores across variables in items 1, 9 and 20. This shows that the respondents do not recognize human rights as inherent in the person, and consequently consider human rights in the context of give-and-take relationship between and among human beings. The students also evidently lack knowledge on the responsibility that goes with the exercise of one's rights. Thus, they misconstrue human rights as absolute freedom. Based on the responses to items about cultural practices in relation to human rights awareness, the former sometimes comes stronger than the latter.

The results of the survey concluded that a more aggressive and effective human rights education program is necessary to ensure the proper dissemination and education of human rights among second year high school students. Training of teachers in handling human rights discussions, including making them understand the importance of human rights education in maintaining quality life, is necessary. Teaching methods should emphasize the application/relevance of human rights to daily life as lived by the respondents in their respective milieus. The teaching of human rights, should be more meaningful, should take into consideration the profile of students such as ethnicity and geographical location. This would also minimize misconception/misinterpretation of human rights brought about by such variables. Human rights concepts that the students lack knowledge of should be given more emphasis. These are concepts on the inherent quality of human rights and on the

responsibility that goes with the exercise of one's rights, among others. A more dynamic human rights education should be implemented in ARMM, public schools, rural and urban areas and among Muslims since the survey results consistently show lower performance of students.

The seeming lack of materials for teaching human rights specifically in public schools should be resolved. Teaching materials such as textbooks, copies of laws, UN documents, lesson plans, and learning standards should be provided to the teachers. Since knowledge of human rights does not automatically translate into participation in human rights activities and practice, school policies and gaps between theory and practice should be reviewed and evaluated. The ambivalence of teachers in teaching human rights should be looked into. Intensive teacher training together with clear policies and administrative support should be put in place.

Thus, in consideration with the renowned significance of Human Rights in the education sector, this study would like to assess the perceptions of students on Human Rights. Youths have always been an integral part of any development initiative. One thing is certain, there can be no sustainable development without promoting Human Rights. The concept of Human Rights is deep-rooted in freedom of thought and the dignity of human being.

All documents pointing to human rights give a prominent place to education and stress the importance of education in promoting human rights. For we may be talking about human rights or hearing news about it, but might not know our these by heart. Sometimes, people experience human rights violation without them knowing. The concern on awareness now emerges into the tip of our consciousness. Thus, the results of this study may serve as a baseline data for Basilan State College to determine the level of students' awareness and/or perception on specific human rights in the Philippines. In a larger context, results may also help in determining relevant interventions and programs for students in the talk about human rights. At the core, this aims to acknowledge the importance of proper education on stimulating responsiveness towards human rights initiatives among students.

**II. METHODOLOGY**

The population under study is the Political Science students of the Basilan State College. In consideration of the population size and limited time to gather the necessary statistical data, the researchers decided to adopt the Quota Sampling technique to determine the sample size. Quota sampling is a non-probability sampling technique where the assembled sample has the same proportions of individuals as the entire population with respect to known characteristics, traits or focused phenomenon. The main reason why the researchers chose quota sample is that it allows the researchers to sample a subgroup that is of great interest to the study. If a study aims to investigate a trait or a characteristic of a certain subgroup, this type of sampling is the ideal technique. Hence, the researchers decided to set the sample size to fifty (50) AB Political Science IV students.

A two-part survey questionnaire was used to gather the needed data for the conduct of the study. Part I contains the basic demographic profile of the respondents such as gender, civil status, and ethnicity. Part II on the other hand contains the main survey questions composed of ten (10) items. The survey questionnaire used the Likert-Type Scale to determine the respondents' level of agreement to each item.

**III. PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF DATA**

This section shows the statistical results of the survey conducted last February 8, 2019 to the fifty (50) AB Political Science IV students of subject population. The raw data were input and analyzed using the SPSS version 20 software. Below is the frequency table that shows the distribution of respondents according to gender, civil status, age and ethnicity.

**Frequency Table**

**Table 1. Gender**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Male	21	42.0	42.0	42.0
Valid Female	29	58.0	58.0	100.0
Total	50	100.0	100.0	

**Table 2. Ethnicity**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Single	40	80.0	80.0	80.0
Valid Married	8	16.0	16.0	96.0
Valid Separated	2	4.0	4.0	100.0
Total	50	100.0	100.0	

**Table 3. Civil Status**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid Yakan	19	38.0	38.0	38.0
Valid Tausug	16	32.0	32.0	70.0
Valid Samal	4	8.0	8.0	78.0
Valid Bisaya	9	18.0	18.0	96.0
Valid Chavacano	2	4.0	4.0	100.0
Total	50	100.0	100.0	

Based from the table above, 42 percent of the respondents were male and 58 percent were female. On the basis of ethnicity, the Yakan tribe comprised 38 percent, 32 percent Tausug, 8 percent Samal, 18 percent Bisaya and 4 percent Chavacano. 80 percent of the respondents are single, 16 percent married and 4 percent separated. In terms of age, 96 percent ranges from 17 years to 27 years old, while the four percent falls under 28-38 years and 38 and above respectively.

**Table 4. Human Rights Perception**

Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	Don't know	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1. Children have the same human rights	22 (44%)	23 (46%)	1 (2%)	3 (6%)	1 (2%)
2. The right to ancestral domain is the human rights of lumads/IPs which the state has to respect and protect at all times.	21 (42%)	25 (50%)	2 (4%)	2 (4%)	0 (0%)
3. Person with disabilities like deaf, blind and mentally challenged have the right to ask the state for support.	29 (58%)	16 (32%)	3 (6%)	1 (2%)	1 (2%)
4. Human rights are important for all.	28 (56%)	17 (34%)	1 (2%)	3 (6%)	1 (2%)
5. Notorious criminals also have rights.	14 (28%)	28 (56%)	2 (4%)	3 (6%)	3 (6%)
6. Human rights are inherent.	12 (24%)	23 (46%)	2 (4%)	9 (18%)	4 (8%)
7. I need to know more about my rights.	24 (48%)	23 (46%)	1 (2%)	1 (2%)	1 (2%)
8. Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security person.	28 (56%)	20 (40%)	1 (2%)	0 (0%)	1 (2%)
9. Parents have a prior right to choose the kind of education that shall be given to their children.	22 (44%)	23 (46%)	2 (4%)	2 (4%)	1 (2%)
10. Everyone has the right to leave any country, including his own and return to his country.	20 (40%)	26 (52%)	3 (6%)	0 (0%)	1 (2%)

**International Journal of Novel Research in Humanity and Social Sciences**

Vol. 9, Issue 6, pp: (31-36), Month: November - December 2022, Available at: [www.noveltyjournals.com](http://www.noveltyjournals.com)

Table 4 presents the respondents' perception in terms of certain human rights and/or practices. Results suggest that the respondents consider children's rights equal to that of the adults (n=45;90%). The Indigenous People (IP) and Lumads also have the right to seek the State's protection of their ancestral domain (n=46;92%); persons with special needs have the right for support (n=45; 90%); and that persons deprived of liberty still have their inherent rights that the State must protect (n=42;84%). In terms of basic human rights, the respondents consider human rights to be inherent and everyone has the right to life, liberty and security. Forty-six (46%) agrees that parents have a prior right to choose the kind of education that shall be given to their children. Also, fifty-two (52%) agrees that everyone has the right to leave any country, including his own and return to his country. While forty-eight percent (48%) has the intent to learn more about their inherent rights. Overall, most of the respondents (n=45;90%) consider human rights as an important aspect for all.

**Table 5. Correlations (Human Rights Perception and Civil Status)**

Correlations			HumanRightsPercep	CivilStatus
Spearman's rho	HumanRightsPercep	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	-.037
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.800
		N	50	50
	CivilStatus	Correlation Coefficient	-.037	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.800	.
		N	50	50

Table 5 shows that there is a weak negative correlation between civil status and the overall perception of the respondents. This correlation coefficient was found to be statistically nonsignificant (n.s.) given its significance level greater than 0.05 (α). This suggests that the overall perception of respondents is not in any way correlated to their civil status.

**Table 6. Correlations (Human Rights Perception and Gender)**

Correlations			HumanRightsPercep	Gender
Spearman's rho	HumanRightsPercep	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.023
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.876
		N	50	50
	Gender	Correlation Coefficient	.023	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.876	.
		N	50	50

The correlation between gender and human rights perception was found to be statistically nonsignificant (n.s.) with a weak positive correlation. Hence, it can be said that the overall perception of students was not influenced by their sexual orientations.

**Table 7. Correlations (Human Rights Perception and Ethnicity)**

Correlations			HumanRightsPerception	Ethnicity
Spearman's rho	HumanRightsPerception	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	-.263
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.065
		N	50	50
	Ethnicity	Correlation Coefficient	-.263	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.065	.
		N	50	50

The correlation between ethnicity and the overall human rights perception among the respondents shows a weak negative correlation indicating that their perceptions were not correlated in any way with their ethnic identities. Even so, given its significance level greater than  $\alpha$ , this result is taken as statistically nonsignificant (n.s.).

**Table 8. Mean Gender**

Human Rights Perception	Gender	
	Male	Female
	Mean	Mean
	4.89	4.89

**Table 9. Mean Civil Status**

Human Rights Perception	Civil Status			
	Single	Married	Separated	Widow/er
	Mean	Mean	Mean	Mean
	4.89	4.86	4.95	-

**Table 10. Mean Ethnicity**

Human Rights Perception	Ethnicity					
	Yakan	Tausug	Samal	Bisaya	Chavacano	Others
	Mean	Mean	Mean	Mean	Mean	Mean
	4.91	4.88	4.95	4.84	4.85	-

In conclusion, the results of this study show that most of the student-respondents are in accord that human rights are for all and considered to be an important element of the community. This indicates a high level of awareness among respondents on the talk about human rights. Specific demographic differences i.e. gender, ethnicity and civil status hold little to no influence to their perceptions on human rights practices. However, it must be noted that there were some disagreements on certain items. This leads the researchers to believe that there are still remaining works to be done in terms of information and knowledge dissemination among students. Relative to this, the College through its program departments may initiate information drives to promote enhanced awareness among students. Future researchers may also consider exploring the perceptions of students from other academic programs to warrant conclusive results.

#### REFERENCES

- [1] <https://www.bartleby.com/essay/Human-Rights-Violation-in-the-Philippines-PKHSSJC436ZZA>, accessed February 4, 2019
- [2] <https://essayturf.com/blog/human-rights-in-the-philippines/>, accessed February 4, 2019
- [3] [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Human\\_rights\\_in\\_the\\_Philippines](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Human_rights_in_the_Philippines), accessed February 4, 2019 W.-K. Chen, *Linear Networks and Systems*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, pp. 123–135, 1993.
- [4] <https://www.bartleby.com/essay/Human-Rights-Violation-in-the-Philippines-PKHSSJC436ZZA>, accessed February 4, 2019
- [5] Jayantibhai V. Patel, Human Rights Education (March 2007), 8-9.
- [6] Nava, et.al., Human Rights Awareness of Secondary School Students in the Philippines: A Sample Survey (Volume III)
- [7] Jayantibhai V. Patel, Human Rights Education (March 2007), 1.